

**45th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
September 13, 2023
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council, Interim Chair
Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commission
Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Dave Steichen, Dilworth City Council
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Jace Hellman, Horace City Council (proxy)
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Michelle Draxten, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Megan Myrdal, Food of the North
Jill Ambuehl, Great Plains Food Bank
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda

A motion to approve the order and contents of the overall agenda was made by Mr. Krabbenhoft and seconded by Mr. York. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from May 10, 2023.

A motion to approve the minutes for May 2023 was made by Ms. Engler and seconded by Ms. Johnson. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2. Commission Introductions

Interim Chair Nesemeier lead Commission and steering committee members in a brief round of introductions.

3. Food of the North Update

Megan Myrdal, co-founder and operations director of Food of the North, provided the Commission with a brief update as well as information on a few of Food of the North's concluding events and activities, including a farewell celebration at Drekker Brewhalla in Fargo on December 1.

4. GleanND Presentation

Ms. Tweet provided the Commission information on GleanND as well as key food system statistics in Cass and Clay counties. She explained that gleaning is the act of collecting excess fresh food from farms, gardens, farmers markets, grocers, restaurants, and other sources to provide for those in need. She noted that 4.7 percent of households in Cass County and 7.4 percent of households in Clay County are food insecure, and that of the 37,432 individuals served by the Great Plains Food Bank in the area, 34 percent are children and 15 percent are seniors.

Ms. Tweet explained that a blueprint for gleaning practices was developed by the Cass Clay Food Partners in September 2017 and that Fargo Cass Public Health allocated funding to launch a regional gleaning network in 2018. She noted that during GleanND's pilot season, volunteers collected 7,092 pounds of food during six separate gleans. Produce collected during these periods included corn, cucumbers, green beans, swiss chard, and peppers. She stated that the network was expanded to Bismarck in 2021, with a focus on apple gleaning, and that nearly 100 volunteers remain in the network today.

5. Cass Clay Food Partners Resource Review

Mr. Altenburg explained that in the past eight years, the Cass Clay Food Partners had developed nearly two dozen resource documents highlighting urban agriculture, food access, sustainability, and other food systems topic areas relevant to the Fargo-Moorhead area. He noted that these documents have included blueprints, which look at food systems from a land development code perspective; and issue briefs and snapshots, which provide more of an overview of an issue the community may have seen locally.

Mr. Altenburg provided a brief overview of the Backyard Beekeeping blueprint first developed in August 2015.

6. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. Draxten provided an informational update to the Commission regarding the Regional Food Policy Council Community of Practice program as well as an update on the new USDA Regional Food Business Center for North Dakota and Minnesota. She also presented a video on Eating Fresh and Local on a Budget developed by the Cass Clay Food Partners and the City of Fargo in late 2022.

7. Cass Clay Hunger Coalition: Overview and Invitation to Annual Hunger and Health Summit

Jill Ambuehl, Community and State Coalition Coordinator at the Great Plains Food Bank, highlighted the work of the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition and spoke about the upcoming 6th Annual Hunger and Health Summit on October 26.

Ms. Ambuehl stated that the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition represents more than 40 organizations working collaboratively to end hunger. She noted that organizations include school nutrition programs, local businesses, healthcare partners, charitable feeding organizations, local non-profits, public health and human services, and others. She explained that the coalition works to improve health, wellness, and the livelihoods of those living in Cass and Clay counties by focusing on the root causes of hunger, and increasing access to food and other services. Some of the strategies she highlighted were expanding and strengthening the coalition's Meal Repack Program, collocating essential services, assessing and coordinating food resources and access, and engaging with the coalition's other members.

Ms. Ambuehl informed the Commission about the 6th Annual Hunger and Health Summit at the Bluestem Center for the Arts on October 26. She noted that confirmed speakers for the event include Ruth Buffalo of the First Nations Women’s Alliance and the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition, Ava Williams of Solutions Consulting, Faye Seidler of Faye Seidler Consulting, and Whitney Johnson of Family HealthCare.

8. Kudos and Community Recognition

Ms. Draxten highlighted several people and organizations for their work in the community including:

- The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) recently awarded funding to schools across Minnesota to increase the amount of healthy local foods through its Farm to School programs. The programs support Minnesota school districts and early childhood education centers that want to buy and serve agricultural products produced in Minnesota. Through this program, Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton (DGF) Public Schools and Shannon Nowak, Director of Nutrition Services, received \$71,000 in grant funding to kick start its Farm to Tray program. DGF hopes to work with 10 local farmers during the 2023-24 school year. Locally grown food and ingredients include beef, potatoes, whole wheat, honey, and vegetables.

Shannon Nowak and DGF Public Schools Superintendent Shannon Hunstad were both congratulated for their efforts.

- Steering committee member Rory Beil will be inducted into the UND Letterwinners Association Hall of Fame on October 12 and honored with the Thomas J. Clifford Award. This award was established to honor former UND President, Thomas J. Clifford, and recognizes UND alumni who serve as athletic coaches at the high school or collegiate level. Rory is a former UND sprinter and hurdler who still holds four spots in the program’s all-time top-10 list, and has served as the head coach for Fargo Davies High School for the last 10 years. His teams have won eight state titles, including four consecutive championship teams from 2016-19. He has also won state coach of the year four times.

9. Public Comment Opportunity

Interim Chair Nesemeier informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. She noted that members of the community may also submit comments via a comment link when Commission packets are emailed out.

Interim Chair Nesemeier noted that a virtual question had come from Dr. Nancy Turrubiates and students from the NDSU School of Nursing asking what voice would be helpful for future advocacy for the Food Commission and what future nurses in the community should consider regarding food insecurity.

Ms. Engler inquired about the questions that are asked during well-child check-ups at specific ages and whether food insecurity is addressed at these times. Ms. Draxten responded that there are validated questions to address food insecurity that are asked at a majority of appointments and that questions are implemented at each public health institution.

Ms. Johnson encouraged opportunities outside of a clinical setting for work, such as opportunities within public health or Head Start programs. She expressed that, in her experience, she is able to connect to people on a deeper level and is able to work more closely with people to address food insecurity and additional needs.

Interim Chair Nesemeier responded that the Food Commission has five at-large positions and that many current and former members have had public health backgrounds. She lauded their voices on the Commission over the years. She also stressed the importance of having those with nursing and other public health backgrounds run for public office to influence policies and to better shape the well-being of communities and individuals.

Whitney Oxendahl, former steering committee member and co-founder of the Red River Market, shared information about the Fargo-Moorhead Local Foods Facebook page. She noted that over the past few years, the group has grown to nearly 5,000 members and that the page has updates on farmers markets, community gardens, restaurants, producers, and local food nonprofits.

10. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable: Community Updates and Meeting Reflections

Interim Chair Nesemeier asked for the Commission and the steering committee to share any additional updates or meeting reflections.

11. Commission Action Steps

Interim Chair Nesemeier stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on November 8, 2023. She also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on October 6 at 8:00 AM and that the next Coffee with the Commission event would be held in October.

Interim Chair Nesemeier adjourned the meeting at 11:52 AM.